

Vote buying and campaign promises<sup>☆</sup>Philip Keefer<sup>a,\*</sup>, Razvan Vlaicu<sup>b</sup><sup>a</sup> Institutions for Development Department, Inter-American Development Bank, 1300 New York Ave NW, Washington, DC 20577, USA<sup>b</sup> Research Department, Inter-American Development Bank, 1300 New York Ave NW, Washington, DC 20577, USA

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## ABSTRACT

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What explains the wide variation across countries in the use of vote buying and policy promises during election campaigns? We address this question, and account for a number of stylized facts and apparent anomalies regarding vote buying, using a model in which parties cannot fully commit to campaign promises. We find that high vote buying is associated with frequent renegeing on campaign promises, strong electoral competition, and high policy rents. Frequent renegeing and low party competence reduce campaign promises. If vote buying can be financed out of public resources, incumbents buy more votes and enjoy an electoral advantage, but they also promise more public goods. Vote buying has distributional consequences: voters targeted with vote buying pre-election may receive no government benefits post-election. The results point to obstacles to the democratic transition from clientelist to programmatic forms of electoral competition: parties may not benefit electorally from institutions that increase commitment. *Journal of Comparative Economics* 45 (2017) 773–792. Institutions for Development Department, Inter-American Development Bank, 1300 New York Ave NW, Washington, DC 20577, USA; Research Department, Inter-American Development Bank, 1300 New York Ave NW, Washington, DC 20577, USA.

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## 1. Introduction

Vote buying is a common practice in democracies, but its use varies widely across countries. The fraction of respondents to a global survey who said that vote buying occurred often in their country ranged from 12 percent in the OECD to 56 percent in South Asia; and from 4.3 percent of Dutch respondents to 75.8 percent of Brazilian.<sup>1</sup> What explains the large variation across countries in the use of vote buying? The literature on vote buying has mostly focused on the effectiveness of this strategy from the politicians' perspective, given the costs and reciprocity issues it raises. To account for the emergence of vote buying, the literature emphasizes politician incentives to target benefits to individual voters. From the voter's perspective, however, a key feature of vote buying is that its benefits are obtained pre-election, circumventing the commit-

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<sup>1</sup> The World Values Survey, Wave Six (2010–2014).



# Poverty and vote buying: Survey-based evidence from Africa



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## ABSTRACT

Alongside the spread of democracy in the developing world, vote buying has emerged as an integral part of election campaigns. Yet, we know little about the causes of vote buying in young democracies. In this paper, we analyse the sources of vote buying in sub-Saharan African. Using data from the *Afrobarometer*, we focus on the impact of poverty on vote buying at the individual- and country-level. Results from multilevel regressions show that poor voters are significantly more likely to be targets of vote buying than wealthier voters. This effect increases when elections are highly competitive. Thus, micro-level poverty seems to be an important source of vote buying in Africa and has major implications for the way electoral democracy operates.

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## 1. Introduction

Vote markets used to be widespread during the early stages of democracy in Western Europe, but largely seemed to disappear with economic development (Aidt and Jensen, 2012). In recent decades, new waves of democratization have occurred around the globe, bringing democracy well beyond the borders of the Western world. While these transitions are usually celebrated, they have also lead to renewed debate about the operation of democracy in developing countries. Indeed, alongside transitions to democracy, vote buying – understood as the direct exchange of money or gifts for votes – has made a powerful return to the scene of democratic politics. Reports of vote buying come from most regions of the world, including Asia (Hicken, 2007), Africa (Bratton, 2008; Vicente and Wantchekon, 2009), the Middle East (Blaydes, 2006), and Latin America (Brusco et al., 2004; Stokes, 2005; Gonzales-

Ocantos et al., 2012). Thus, vote buying seems to be an integral feature of electoral politics in new democracies across the world. In this paper we contribute to this literature by providing new evidence on how vote markets operate in elections with *de jure* secret ballot, with a particular focus on the relationship between poverty and voters' experience with being offered pre-election rewards in return for votes.

Vote buying is a particular form of political clientelism, i.e. the direct exchange at the individual level of rewards and material goods by political patrons in return for electoral support by voters (Stokes, 2007a; Hicken, 2011; Linos, 2013; Robinson and Verdier, 2013). It is widely accepted that clientelistic politics create economic inefficiencies, reduce the supply of public goods, and bias public policy in favour of elites (Stokes, 2007a; Vicente and Wantchekon, 2009; Robinson and Verdier, 2013). Vote buying also raises questions about the character of democracy. While elections involving vote buying may be 'free' – allowing voters to choose between multiple candidates in elections with universal suffrage – they collide with standards of democratic 'fairness', because the interests of some voters are bought by parties before the election, and may

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# Conceptualizing vote buying

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigates the concept of vote buying, with a particular focus on its usage in research on clientelism. Vote buying is often poorly defined. Such conceptual ambiguity may distort descriptive findings and threaten the validity of causal claims. Qualitative analysis suggests that researchers often employ the concept of vote buying differently, and regressions from Nigeria and Mexico suggest that using alternative definitions can yield divergent empirical results. This diverse usage also poses the risk of conceptual stretching, because scholars often use vote buying to describe other phenomena. To improve future research, analysts should pay close attention to the conceptualization of vote buying.

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## 1. Introduction

Use of the term “vote buying” has increased sharply in recent decades. Its mention in published books has quintupled since 1980 (see Fig. 1), and over 10,000 recent academic articles and unpublished manuscripts mention the term.<sup>1</sup> This study investigates the concept of vote buying, with a particular focus on its usage in research on clientelism. We build on influential qualitative work that reveals how conceptual ambiguity can undermine scholarly research (e.g., Sartori, 1970; Collier and Levitsky, 1997; Levitsky, 1998). Although many recent studies continue to advance our understanding of clientelism, they are often imprecise about what constitutes vote buying. This lack of conceptual clarity may distort descriptive findings and threaten the validity of causal claims. Our qualitative analysis suggests that researchers often employ the concept of vote buying differently, and regressions from

Nigeria and Mexico suggest that using alternative definitions can yield divergent empirical results.

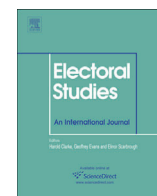
Diverse use of the term “vote buying” also poses the risk of conceptual stretching (Sartori, 1970). Scholars employ the term to describe various political phenomena, such as paying cash to voters on Election Day (Lehoucq, 2007), inducing legislators to support NAFTA (Evans, 2004), increasing pensions for all elderly citizens (Thames, 2001), and paving roads in co-ethnic districts (Burgess et al., 2012). We develop a typology of four distinct ways in which vote buying is used in the scholarly literature, and argue that two of these categories involve conceptual stretching. Studies should clarify how they use vote buying in order to reduce conceptual ambiguity, as well as to improve descriptive and causal inference. They should also pay close attention to potential heterogeneity, as predictions and findings do not necessarily apply across categories of vote buying.

The present article aims to alleviate conceptual ambiguity about vote buying, with a particular focus on how the concept is used in the field of clientelism. To this end, we: (1) identify key differences in how recent studies define clientelist vote buying; (2) examine how these different definitions can affect empirical results; (3) develop a typology of the broader usage of vote buying in political

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<sup>1</sup> The caption of Fig. 1 describes the data about the growth in usage of the term “vote buying.” The number of scholarly works using the term is from Google Scholar (March 2014).



# Where is vote buying effective? Evidence from a list experiment in Kenya<sup>☆</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

Vote buying is common in democracies around the world. Yet relatively little is known about the conditions in which vote buying is an effective campaign strategy, in part because vote buying is challenging to measure. This paper examines the local economic and social conditions in which vote buying influences the behavior of voters in Kenya. I combine data from a nationally representative list experiment conducted after Kenya's 2007 elections with highly disaggregated census data about local economic and social conditions. While 7 percent report that vote buying influenced their vote when asked directly, the list experiment finds that 23 percent were influenced. I find mixed evidence and statistically weak evidence that vote buying is more effective in the local areas where parties should be best able to monitor voters. Vote buying is, however, most effective where voters lack access to information about politics. I discuss the implications of the results for literature on vote buying, clientelism, and electoral accountability.

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Politicians attempt to exchange money for votes in many democracies around the world.<sup>1</sup> Yet, despite its prevalence, empirical evidence on whether vote buying is an effective campaign strategy is mixed. This paper contributes by examining the local social and economic conditions in which vote buying is an effective campaign strategy. Under what conditions does vote buying influence the voting decisions of voters?

This question has direct implications for democratic accountability, representation, and the quality of governance. When politicians and parties can win votes with cash handouts at election time, rather than by performing well while in office, the accountability relationship between voters and their representatives

breaks down. In the worst instances, vote buying may produce a form of “perverse accountability,” whereby vote-buying political parties hold voters accountable for their voting behavior (Stokes, 2005). Moreover, vote buying is likely to undermine the political representation of poor voters who are often the targets of vote-buying efforts (Stokes, 2007). As a result, vote buying may diminish the incentives of governments to be responsive to the needs of those living in poverty (Khemani, 2012).

While this question is of clear importance and relevance to debates about the drivers of weak accountability in democratic contexts, data limitations have made it a difficult one to address. Vote buying is often illegal and generally in violation of well recognized norms about how both politicians and voters should behave in a democratic society. Given the sensitivity of vote buying, survey and interview questions designed to measure its effectiveness are likely to be influenced by “social desirability bias” (Bradburn et al., 1978; DeMaio, 1984; Gonzalez-Ocantos et al., 2012; Tourangeau and Yan, 2007).<sup>2</sup> This poses a challenge to the measurement of vote buying and, because response bias may be concentrated among specific sub-groups of the population

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<sup>1</sup> Vote buying has been documented in contemporary Latin American countries such as Argentina (Auyero, 2001; Brusco et al., 2004), Mexico (Magaloni, 2006), and Nicaragua (Gonzalez-Ocantos et al., 2012); Middle Eastern countries such as Egypt (Blaydes, 2010), Jordan (Lust-Okar, 2006), and Lebanon (Corstange, 2010); in Asian countries such as the Philippines (Khemani, 2012) and Taiwan (Wang and Kurzman, 2007); and in African countries such as Benin (Banegas, 2002), Ghana (Bratton, 2008), São Tomé and Príncipe (Vicente, 2014), and Uganda (Conroy-Krutz and Logan, 2012).

<sup>2</sup> Social desirability bias occurs when survey or interview respondents provide a socially acceptable, rather than a truthful, answer to questions about sensitive attitudes and behaviors.



## Regular Article

# Buying votes versus supplying public services: Political incentives to under-invest in pro-poor policies☆

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## ABSTRACT

This paper provides evidence that vote buying in poor democracies is associated with lower investments in broadly delivered public services that have been shown to disproportionately benefit the poor. Using detailed data around the local institutional context in the Philippines, the paper shows how the correlation can be interpreted as arising in equilibrium under conditions of clientelism, when political strategies emphasize the provision of targeted benefits in exchange for political support. In places where households report more vote buying, government records show that municipalities invest less in basic health services for mothers and children; and, a higher percentage of children are recorded as severely under-weight. Corroborating evidence is provided using Afrobarometer surveys across 33 countries. Taken together, the evidence shows that where politicians purchase political support through targeted transfers, they are likely to trade it off against the provision of broader public services on which poor people rely.

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## 1. Introduction

Political economy explanations for under-investment in pro-poor policies have focused on the notion of elite capture.<sup>1</sup> However, as recently argued by Anderson et al. (forthcoming) and Bardhan and Mookherjee (2012), explanations that rely solely on elite capture appear inadequate in contexts of competitive political institutions where elected leaders depend upon the votes of the poor to gain and remain in office. In these contexts, a source of weak political incentives to deliver broad public services to the poor has been attributed to clientelist

practices of purchasing political support through targeted transfers, or through explicit vote buying at the time of elections (Bardhan and Mookherjee, 2012; Kitschelt and Wilkinson, 2008; Schaffer, 2007; Stokes, 2005, 2007; Vicente and Wantchekon, 2009).<sup>2</sup>

The offering of “gifts” or money in exchange for votes at the time of elections has been found to be widespread in poor democracies, despite the existence of secret ballots. Much of the literature on vote buying has been occupied with the question of how, even in the presence of secret ballots, vote buying might function and be appealing as a political strategy.<sup>3</sup> The equilibrium consequences for public policy performance

☆ This paper is based on research that was undertaken to support local governance and service delivery work led by Yasuhiko Matsuda in the East Asia region of the World Bank. I thank Nathan Nunn for his comments and suggestions which significantly improved the quality of this paper, as well as two anonymous referees. I thank Corinne Stephenson and Cesi Cruz for excellent research assistance, and Yasuhiko Matsuda for his overall support, feedback, and guidance on country context and policy implications of the analysis. I thank Andrew Foster, Philip Keefer, Julien Labonne, Dan Posner, Adam Wagstaff, Rebecca Weitz-Shapiro, and seminar participants at the Development Research Group of the World Bank, Brown University, Boston University, the Delhi School of Economics, the Centre for Policy Research, New Delhi, and at the Indian Statistical Institute, for very useful comments. Disclaimer: The findings, interpretations, and conclusions expressed in this paper are entirely those of the author, and do not necessarily represent the views of the World Bank, its Executive Directors, or the countries they represent.

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<sup>1</sup> See for example: Araujo et al., 2008; Bardhan and Mookherjee, 2005; and Galasso and Ravallion, 2005.

<sup>2</sup> The term “clientelist” is used here in a general sense, as described by Kitschelt and Wilkinson (2008, pp2)—“clientelist accountability represents a transaction, the direct exchange of a citizen’s vote in return for direct payments or continuing access to employment, goods, and services”. That is, clientelism in the Kitschelt–Wilkinson definition includes both post-election transfer of benefits as well as pre-election buying of votes. Vicente and Wantchekon (2009) distinguish between “clientelism” and “vote buying”, although both involve a quid-pro-quo exchange between delivering private favors in exchange for political support. Clientelism is defined in their paper as an exchange of votes for favors conditional on being elected (e.g., jobs in the public sector), and vote buying as votes for cash before an election. However, they blame both (or each) with reducing political incentives for broad public goods. Nichter (2011) defines vote buying strategies as “electoral clientelism” and distinguishes it from “relational clientelism” in which benefits are provided on a longer term basis (rather than just at election times) in exchange for political support. Anderson et al. (forthcoming) study this form of relational clientelism in India.

<sup>3</sup> Some recent contributors are: Finan and Schechter (2012), Gonzalez-Ocantos et al. (2012), Larreguy (2013), Nichter (2008, 2011), Vicente (2010) and Weitz-Shapiro (2012).



***George Towar Ikbāl Tawakkal, Wisnu Suhardono, Andrew D. Garner and Thomas Seitz***

## CONSISTENCY AND VOTE BUYING: INCOME, EDUCATION, AND ATTITUDES ABOUT VOTE BUYING IN INDONESIA

### **Abstract**

This article examines ambivalence—the simultaneous holding of two or more conflicting values or beliefs about a political issue—among Indonesian citizens’ attitudes about vote buying. Using an original survey taken during the 2014 Indonesian elections, we analyse the factors related both to citizens’ normative views about vote buying and their willingness to accept gifts from candidates. A large number of citizens demonstrate ambivalence by viewing the practice as unjustified or corrupt and yet expressing willingness to accept money from candidates. We also examine the differential effects of education and income on these attitudes. Consistent with “demand side” theories of vote buying, low income creates economic pressure to accept money but does not influence normative attitudes about vote buying. Education, however, has a broader effect by influencing both normative attitudes and willingness to accept money. We consider implications of these results for Indonesian officials focused on reducing vote-buying behavior.

### **Keywords**

vote buying, Indonesian politics, Indonesian elections, public opinion, ambivalence, Southeast Asia politics

### INTRODUCTION

The prevalence of vote buying—where candidates and intermediaries distribute commodities or money to citizens in exchange for their votes—has been known to Indonesian scholars for decades. While long viewed as a corrosive and corrupting influence on Indonesian politics, more recent scholarship has begun to focus on the nuances and complexities of vote buying. For example, Fionna (2014) found that intermediaries or “brokers” who distribute money on behalf of candidates often target the most persuadable voters and those who could be persuaded to vote in an upcoming election.<sup>1</sup> Other research has examined the “demand” side of vote buying to determine which voters are most likely to prefer receiving payments from candidates as opposed to broad-based public policies (Shin 2015). Underlying much of this research is a presumption that the practice of vote buying undermines government effectiveness (Hicken and Simmons 2008) and is normatively antithetical to classic conceptions of democracy. Government agencies such as the *Komisi Pemilihan Umum* (or KPU) and the *Kesatuan Bangsa dan Politik* (or



# An empirical analysis of vote buying among the poor: Evidence from elections in the Philippines

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**Mario Antonio Lopez**

Asian Institute of Management, Philippines

## Abstract

Recent literature suggests that the poor are more likely to be targeted for vote buying and to sell their votes. However, there is limited empirical analysis on the patterns of vote buying among low-income voters. This paper attempts to fill this gap using a survey conducted in Metro Manila, Philippines after the 2016 elections. Data analysis shows that vote buying among the poor is indeed very common, but the incidence varies depending on the vote buying type. The most prevalent form uses more benign goods such as food and clothing, but offers of money is still reported by more than a quarter of respondents. Different vote-buying types also have different correlates, including some socio-economic factors, suggesting that it is a finely targeted activity. In addition, money vote buying is predominant in tight elections, but buying votes using non-monetary offers is more common when there is a clear winner even before the election. Most of those who were offered accepted the goods or money, but only about two-thirds voted for the candidate. In addition, evidence suggests that the good or money is not the deciding factor in voting for the candidate. This supports the premise that vote buying is just part of a bigger effort by politicians to build clientelism and patronage among his/her constituencies. Dependency and loyalty is merely punctuated by election-related transfers, rather than an effort to completely change votes.

## Keywords

Vote buying, elections, election fraud, philippines

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## **What Is Vote Buying?**

### **The Limits of the Market Model**

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A slightly revised version will be published under the title “What Is Vote Buying?” in *Elections for Sale: The Causes and Consequences of Vote Buying*, edited by Frederic Charles Schaffer, copyright © 2006 by Lynne Rienner Publishers (Boulder, CO, and London).



## **Abstract**

Many scholars view vote buying as a simple economic transaction: parties and candidates distribute material benefits to individual citizens in exchange for support at the ballot box. Drawing upon a variety of comparative experiences, this paper argues, however, that the commercial aspirations of vote buyers often run into objective as well as intersubjective barriers. On the objective side, seller compliance is uncertain as vote buying does not take place within a “normal” market protected by social and legal norms. On the intersubjective side, electoral practices that outside observers describe as “vote buying” may carry very different meanings in different cultural contexts. To assess empirical claims as well as normative judgments about vote buying, the paper concludes, we need to be aware of the potential gap between our idealized, commercial model of vote buying and the way it actually works in the world.

# Brokers, Voters, and Clientelism

Susan C. Stokes, Thad Dunning, Marcelo  
Nazareno, and Valeria Brusco

Yale University and Universidad Nacional  
de Córdoba

Draft dated March 21, 2012. Please do not circulate  
without permission.

# Social Influence and Political Behavior in Mozambique<sup>\*</sup>

Matilde Grácio<sup>§</sup> and Pedro C. Vicente<sup>†‡</sup>

February 2019

## Abstract:

Political accountability requires electoral participation and informed voters. Both have been lagging in Mozambique. We designed and implemented a field experiment during the municipal elections of 2013 in that country. We study the impact on political behavior of social influence through individual text messages aimed at mobilizing voters, and of location-level distribution of a free newspaper. Importantly, we randomly assign peers, i.e., a quasi-network, to experimental subjects in order to test for exogenous peer influence via text messages. Measurement of political outcomes comes from behavioral measures related to the sending of SMSs by subjects, and from voter behavior based on survey information or the replication of the voting procedure. We find positive effects of the text messages, namely of those coming from male and older peers, on political participation and voting for the ruling party. However, we do not find clear evidence that the strength of the messages or homophily played a role. We find positive effects of the distribution of the newspaper on political participation, and positive interaction effects between the influence from peers and newspaper distribution.

**JEL Codes:** D72, O55.

**Keywords:** Voter Education, Social Networks, Mobile Phones, Newspapers, Political Economy, Randomized Experiment, Field Experiment, Mozambique, Africa.

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# Surat Dukungan

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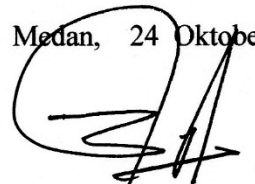
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Maka dapat diberikan pertimbangan keahlian dan keilmuan calon guru besar bahwa: jurnal ***Voting Their Conscience: Poverty, Education, Social Pressure And Vote Buying In Indonesia*** yang dimuat dalam *Journal Of East Asian Studies*, Nomor ISSN 1598-2408, 19, Issue 1, March 2019, pp.19-38, diterbitkan Cambridge University Press. (10.1017/jea.2018.27) adalah merupakan jurnal sosiologi yang menggabungkan irisan bidang sosiologi sebagaimana dijelaskan di atas. Jurnal tersebut lahir dari rekam jejak yang bersangkutan yang mendalami irisan sosiologi politik dan sosiologi industri, sehingga menghasilkan analisis yang mendalam terhadap bidang penelitian dimaksud. Penelitian tentang *vote buying* dan faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhinya merupakan studi sosiologi yaitu membahas hubungan patron-klien antara pengusaha manufacturing dengan buruhnya serta menggunakan teori-teori sosiologi (paradigma perilaku sosial) dan analisisnya menggunakan teori pertukaran sosial. Dengan demikian irisan antar bidang sosiologi politik dan sosiologi industri sangat penting untuk pengembangan bidang sosiologi itu sendiri.

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Menerangkan bahwa karya ilmiah yang telah dipublikasikan oleh:

Nama : Dr. Dra. Ari Pradhanawati, MS  
NIP : 19610501198710 2001  
Jabatan : Calon Guru Besar Bidang Sosiologi  
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dengan judul: *Voting Their Conscience: Poverty, Education, Social Pressure And Vote Buying In Indonesia* yang terbit di *Journal Of East Asian Studies*, Nomor ISSN 1598-2408, 19, Issue 1, March 2019, pp.19-38, diterbitkan Cambridge University Press. (10.1017/jea.2018.27) adalah sesuai dengan bidang sosiologi karena Dr. Dra. Ari Pradhanawati, MS memiliki rekam jeja penelitian, pengabdian dan publikasi yang menggabungkan ilmu sosiologi industri dan sosiologi politik yang mana itu terelaborasi dalam jurnal di atas, yaitu membahas hubungan *patron-klien* dalam perspektif sosiologi.

Elaborasi kedua irisan cabang ilmu sosiologi tersebut menawarkan perspektif penelitian sosiologi yang dapat digunakan untuk mengupas masalah-masalah sosial yang terus berkembang dimasyarakat dan saling berkaitan satu sama lain serta melahirkan banyak masalah sosial yang perlu untuk dikaji lebih dalam lagi. Sosiologi industri dan sosiologi politik sebagai pisau analisis dalam memandang fenomena sosial seperti yang tertuang dalam jurnal tersebut (pembelian suara, kemiskinan, tingkat pendidikan, tekanan sosial dan *vote buying*).

Demikian surat keterangan ini dibuat, untuk dipergunakan sebagai informasi pendukung terkait kesesuaian antara keahlian dan publikasi serta karya ilmiah calon guru besar tersebut dengan bidang sosiologi.

Surabaya, 24 Oktober 2019



Prof. Dr. Bagong Suyanto, Drs., M.Si  
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